

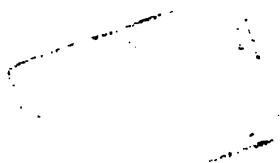
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THE CURSE OF ROME.

MacGraw

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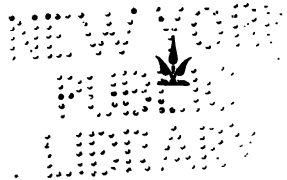




Joseph F. MacGrail
Former Chaplain United States Navy

THE CURSE OF ROME.

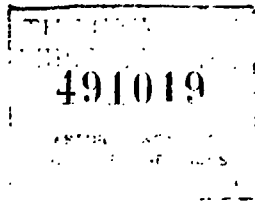
A FRANK CONFESSION OF A CATHOLIC
PRIEST, AND A COMPLETE EXPOSÉ
OF THE IMMORAL TYRANNY
OF THE CHURCH OF
ROME.



BY

VERY REV. CANON JOSEPH F. MACGRAIL

Former Chaplain United States Navy



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By JOSEPH F. MACGRAIL.

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JAN
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Thomas



Daniel

MISERATIONE DIVINA ET SANCTE SEDIS APOSTOLICE GRATIA.
EPISCOPUS CAMPIFONTIS.

Omnibus has Praesentes Inspecturis Fidem Facimus et Testamur
Josephum McGrail esse presbyterum hujus Dioeceseos et testamur
illum esse sacerdotem nulla ecclesiastica censura neque alio
canonico impedimento aut poena quod sciamus irretitum quominus
Missae sacrificium celebrare possit.

In quorum fidem, has praesentes litteras manu Nostra
subscriptas sigilloque Nostro et Secretarii subscriptione
munitas fieri jussimus.

Datum Campifonte ex Aedibus Nostris Episcopalibus die 12a
mensis Februarii A. D. 1905.

De Mandato Rev^{mi} Dⁿⁱ Dⁿⁱ Episcopi.

[SEAL]

Jas F. Ahern
Secretarius.

(Translation)

To all who may read this letter, we give faith and bear witness that Joseph MacGrail is a
clergyman of this diocese, and we testify he is a priest whom we know to be under neither eccle-
siastical censure, nor any canonical impediment or punishment, which can prevent him from cele-
brating the sacrifice of the Mass.

In testimony of which we have ordered this letter, subscribed by our hand, to be fortified
with our seal and the signature of the Secretary.

Given at our Episcopal Mansion in Springfield, on the 12th day of the month of February
in the year of the Lord, 1905.

By order of his Most Reverend Lordship the Bishop.

JAS. F. AHERN, Secretary.

***"Whoever acts, whoever utters honest thought,
runs the risk of doing harm, but not to act and not
to utter honest thought, is not to be a man."*—**
BISHOP SPALDING, in "Thoughts and Theories of Life
and Education."

THE CURSE OF ROME.

THE CONFESSION.

However little the world may care to hear the confessions of another Augustine, not yet a Saint, however little profit may come to humanity from the life story of a young fallen priest, determined to rise again an honest man, however much harm may be traced to writings which attack the oldest form of Christianity, it is the author's firm conviction that Duty points the way, and only good can ultimately flow from these pages, else they would remain a hidden history.

This book is a sort of "Apologia pro Vita Sua," being an explanation of the inward movements of the soul, and a narration of the more important occurrences that influenced the mind, or followed certain influences on the mind, of a

young man during his preparation for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and six subsequent years of active ministrations, three and one-half of which were spent in the United States Navy, as Chaplain.

The acts which reflect disgraceful weakness, requiring apology and reparation, are reluctantly made public, though the demands of circumstances appear to warrant the scandal that may arise. They sting the writer to his heart's innermost fibre. Still, he does not seek to palliate his deeds, nor to vindicate a once fair name. Not what we have been, but what we are to-day is the truest test of manhood. Let us rejoice that for a time our character was unblemished, let us grieve that shameful sins have ever stolen from its lustre, but let us never stand dismayed or disheartened, sinking into newer and deeper mires. "I'll try again, I'll die or conquer" is a motto that brings to no crest dishonor or defeat.

Were I encumbered with vast wealth, it would seem no less my duty to publish every line within these covers, and, indeed, had I been a man of

fortuned thousands, long ago would this book have seen the light. Still, to forestall the awaited criticism, "He wrote all that to make money," I plead guilty to hoping for and anticipating some pecuniary return, and I have not as yet prayed that it may be small. Maybe my ecclesiastical training schooled me to get a price even for the most honest and most holy thoughts, words and acts. Mass and the Sacraments, I know, have always reaped, and still reap, a rich golden harvest for the "laborers in the vineyard," to whom the most familiar, and among themselves most quoted, text of Scripture is, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Surely, the Church should not consider honest thought and money incompatible.

I now humbly and publicly apologize and ask pardon for any disgrace that may have been brought upon and any humiliation or mortification that may have been felt by the officers, especially my confrères, the chaplains, and men of the United States Navy, on account of the lamentable termination of my career as an officer. I hold

"Our Fighters of the Deep" in the highest regard.

Whatever neglect of a chaplain's duty may be charged against me came from a heart with no faith as a priest, bound by a terrible vow to profess, teach and defend a religion which had ceased to be the only Way, the only Light, and the only Truth, yet in which I was held enthralled by a body of men, headed by the Pope, holding over me menacingly, lest I in honesty should withdraw, the dreaded and frightful "Pereat" (Let him perish): "Before all men let him be forever an outcast, and before God let him be eternally damned."

May the critic bear in mind that "Even in the best writers there is much that is inferior in thought and style, as in the fairest landscape there is much that is commonplace."*

If anyone think it were better I had held my peace, let him remember, "The impulse to utter what is deepest in us is irresistible."*

* Bishop Spalding.

THE DREADED "PEREAT."

A hot sun was beating on Manila Bay. Rusty wrecks of the defeated Spanish fleet were anchored in Cavite Harbor. The heat and the gloomy ruins of war intensified the strain on a prisoner's mind. I was gazing through a large air-port on the starboard side of the Flagship "Rainbow." A terrible conflict impended, with the soul of a man as the field of action.

"Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." Shall it be the priesthood and perdition, or honest renunciation? Every cell of my brain is on fire. The contest is strangely furious. Theology and experience,

* faith and reason are duelling even unto death.
Can the fight be real, or is it only the phantom of
a deluded mind?

I am under arrest charged with grave misdeeds,
about to face a court-martial. Why? Swift the
answer of conscience, "Thou hast been an un-
scrupulous religious hypocrite." I knew I was
guilty, and I fain would have proclaimed the
truth, but that same secret power which for
months and months had overawed me, in the vain
hope of protecting the innocent kin who would
be woestricken and disgraced by an honest avowal
of my heart's convictions, still whispered to my
weakened will,—“Deny the accusations, despise
your conscience and live on, a hypocrite,—the
Church says you must!”

How often that voice within had called and
called for me to stop! Wrathful at my deafness,
the Mighty Power above had seized me, and at
last I saw in the heavens, the great device of all
creeds and all nations, God's greatest, only rule
of life, “Be Honest!”

I fell upon my knees and breathed this prayer,

"Almighty God, I do not ask Thee to give me back my youth, nor yet to make me proof against the miseries of life; give me but the power to be honest, now and till I die. Though exiled, reviled and detested, let no lie be ever again blotted on my soul!"

I became momentarily a regenerated man, and thereupon decided positively to renounce a false priesthood, that had ensnared me, and transformed a pure, true, God-given mind, into a weak, dishonest, polluted, Church-serving conscience.

In the archives of the Navy Department at Washington lie twelve hundred pages of typewritten record, the longest story of any illregulated life that a United States Navy Court-martial ever set out to punish. Only because a Presidential election was impending, and the culprit was a Roman Catholic priest, did the world miss the details of a scandal that makes "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" read like a simple nursery melody.

The author once took on publicly the armor of the priesthood, professing his belief in an

ancient faith, and his willingness ever to defend it. At that time, this seemed his duty. At length it seems as imperative a duty to renounce, with like publicity, that same priesthood, for "Truth can be outraged by silence quite as cruelly as by speech." In so doing, special emphasis must be laid on the heartless tyranny and immoral slavery to which the Roman Catholic Church subjects her priests, by refusing absolutely to release them honorably from their vowed obligations, either when they feel—or believe or know (experience teaches)—that they cannot fully abide by their vow of chastity, or when the inward and irrepressible convictions of their conscience have so altered their religious views that they cannot honestly, without reserve, and unequivocally teach and encourage the world to follow, as the one way to heaven, all the discipline and dogmatic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. At him who dares refuse to be a hypocrite Rome hurls the poisoned "Pereat" (Let him perish), and thinks it a triumph to have him wander dishonored and disowned even by his nearest kin.

I raise my voice to-day in eternal protest against such an ungodly and damnable outrage on truth, purity and honesty, and warningly I say to every pious young man, contemplating ordination, "Think long and well, and then step back, before the mitred one has uttered the magic, yet fatal words, 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.'"

Mistake not the end of my scribbled thoughts. I cast no blame on the Church for my sins. I committed them with a free will. I repent of them now. Any punishments that have been visited upon me were not undeserved.

Towards the great mass of American and French priests (during three years of study in France I came in close contact with the clergy of that country) I entertain the kindest feelings. As a class they are among the most upright, wholesouled, capable, and self-sacrificing men in a community. I am positive, nevertheless, that sixty per cent of them, in the United States, would resign from the priesthood to-morrow if they could do so without dishonor, for not more than

forty per cent are totally blind and believe their plight is divinely decreed. The false and silly notion of avoiding the scandal of withdrawal, the erroneous idea that, "The religious (Roman Catholic) view of life must forever remain the true view, since no other explains our longings and aspirations, or justifies hope and enthusiasm," and, especially, the pain of separation and estrangement from home and friends, hold in servitude the repining majority.

If there is one spark of animosity in my heart against priests, it is first because of the unjustly imposed obligation to profess and to uphold blindly and dishonestly a religion in which one no longer has true faith, and secondly because of the law of celibacy, legitimate in itself for those who can observe it, but abominable for those who cannot abide by it, yet are mercilessly held to it when frankly and manfully asking to be released. I maintain that each individual priest, who retains his Roman collar and sacred garb, is responsible for these laws and all laws and customs of his organization, together with

their necessary consequences, mindful of the recent words (applicable to the Church) of His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, speaking of corruption and other evils in our modern system of finance, "A corporation (such is the hierarchy of the Church from priest to Pope) should be regarded as the sum of the entire number of individuals composing it, and *each member* of that corporation should be held by the public to a full accountability for each and every act of the entire corporation, whether that act be great or small, important or unimportant."

HOW I BECAME A PRIEST.

Every man can look back to some event that has been a turning point in his life. When I crossed the threshold of the Grand Séminaire de St. Sulpice, in Paris, on October 12th, 1896, to begin a cheerless existence in a damp, cold, sunless room, to be taught that mortification and sanctification are twins, my heart was willing and docile. Christ had suffered, why not I? No sacrifice seemed too great for the cause of my holy religion. How fortunate, I thought, to be in France! What a blessing to be privileged to live among those who had for centuries reaped the rich harvest of divine favors, and who, being close to the earthly fountain of grace, Rome, would, by the splendor of their piety and faith, reveal to me the grandeur and power of my religion. Oh! sad, sad delusion!

The customs and the exalted state of the Church in the Catholic countries of Europe had been represented to me, while in America, as the fullness and greatness of God's kingdom on earth. Behold, in France, the vaunted "Eldest daughter of the Church," I was presented to a nation in utter religious decadence (that is, according to Roman Catholic standards), so hopeless that my French professors, in order to nourish the faith of the young, discouraged, native seminarians, related wondrous tales of the remarkable progress of the Church in the United States and Canada. Where religion should have been enthroned it was enslaved. Incomprehensible contradiction! Instead of seeing priests respectfully greeted in the streets of Paris, there was only a jeering "Caw, Caw," or a loudly shouted "Fourneau," that emphasized the people's mocking reverence. The very domestics of the seminary, scarcely less often than the sneering cabmen on the street corners, hissed "Imbéciles" at us. At home such insulting manners towards a priest, or any man of stamina, would have meant a thrashing then

and there. Often we Americans were sorely tempted to give a public lesson in muscular Christianity, but it would have meant expulsion, and, besides, we were told it made us Christlike to submit humbly to jeers, jibes and scoffs.

Instead of finding myself in the midst of a deeply Catholic people, God-fearing and virtuous, my tent was pitched among atheists, bitter in their hatred and persistent in their ridicule of that religion which from infancy I had learned to revere as divine truth. Instead of feasting in rich orchards where the fruits of faith and sanctity should have been cultivated to perfection, I had only the thoughts of the Church at home, and my training of youth, to nourish my virtue. Surely, in France, the *holy* Roman Catholic Religion has been tried and found wanting.

Put the blame where you will, France is not, to-day, a Roman Catholic country. Far from it! Not one-fourth of her population either believe in or practice the Roman Catholic Religion, and to me, after three years of intimate association with Frenchmen, in study and in travel throughout

their land, it is highly amusing to read in the rabid clerical papers that the Jews and Free-Masons are ruling the country. It would be better for France if they were, but the truth is, the great mass of the common people, the purest blood of Gaul, are anti-clerical and irreligious. To be sure, the Jews and Free-Masons hate the ecclesiastical authorities, because you, Priests and Bishops, hate them and encourage in diverse ways animosity towards them.

It was only lack of power that prevented "Une Saint Barthélemy des Juifs" (A St. Bartholomew of the Jews) in 1899, during the height of the Dreyfus affair.

With Scripture as our standard, telling us to judge the tree by its fruits, what must be the verdict of an honest mind contemplating the Church in France? The tree should be chopped down. Little by little the vigor of my faith was lost in the Gallic ruins.

Let me turn to my diary of 1896. I find the questions, "How came I a Roman Catholic? Answer. I was born one. Why am I now a

Catholic? Answer. I freely believe that Roman Catholicism is the one and only true faith." At *that* time I really accepted firmly with heart and soul the tenets which, I have since learned, are without sound foundation.

Undoubtedly had I never entered the priesthood, I would have continued through life a practical, and perhaps even a devout, Roman Catholic, because the secret inner workings and the real truth about the Church would have remained inaccessible.

"How did you ever happen to become a priest?" I often have been asked.

At about the age of fifteen, I began to have a feeling that I would like to be one. It was just an impulse, an inward movement. Maybe I admired the sanctity of my venerable pastor, Father John Power, who for years had led a holy life that edified me, and excited me to imitation. Maybe I thought the priesthood a way to help my fellow-men to be happy. Perhaps I thought the austere life of a true priest would be the surest way to expiate my childhood transgressions.

I did not really reflect much about the matter. I recall well that I perceived a marked inclination to become a priest, but just why I wanted to be one, I never at that time thought out in definite, numbered reasons. However, during my four years in the public High School of Worcester, I felt myself more and more strongly bent toward the service of the Church.

I was never an altar boy, never intimately associated with priests, nor was I ever urged by a single soul to become a priest. My father died when I was but twelve years of age, leaving me the oldest of five boys. Our devoted mother, while strict and careful about Church duties, and the observance of Sunday, had no extraordinary taste for the filagree part of religion. Hers was a solid piety, but not blind or demonstrative or emotional. She did not long to have a son a priest, though in most Catholic families that is the fondest craving of a parent. On the contrary, she mildly, but persistently, opposed my boyish tendency. She once even, just before my ordination, confided to her sister, when questioned re-

garding her opposition, that the reason for her attitude was fear of my possibly not being forever a good priest. (Time has proven her a wise, foresighted mother.) I was left perfectly free, nevertheless, to persevere in my ambitions.

I was in the habit of going to confession and Communion every few months, often monthly, but I never spoke to the priest of my inclinations, nor did any confessor ever mention to me the advisability of entering the priesthood.

When asked by a relative or friend, "What are you going to be when you are a man?" I would blush and reply, "I don't know." I felt that to be a truthful answer, for I dared not presume to say, "A priest." I had been taught the priesthood was a divine vocation, and I did not feel competent to judge that I had a call from the Almighty to be His personal representative.

I was shy. It embarrassed me to speak to young ladies; I thought I was homely, and that I never could find a girl who would love me enough to marry me. Perhaps that moved me some in the direction of the priesthood. I

"Be careful, be studious, be virtuous,—some day you will be a holy priest of the Most Mighty." No wavering in my faith,—no doubts, no hesitation.

While some of my relatives showed a generous and heartfelt interest in me, and gave me every encouragement to persevere in my desires, never was I unduly influenced.

No man ever acted more freely or unselfishly than I, when presenting myself in Montreal, at the Sulpician House of Philosophy, to don the soutane and surplice of an ecclesiastic, and to begin in earnest what I then thought would be my life's work, the saving of souls as a Roman Catholic priest.

To-day I reject the priesthood, and though I may err in so doing, I assert with Tupper, "Better is the wrong with sincerity, rather than the right with falsehood."

My first year in the seminary was not remarkable in any way. To be sure, certain weaknesses of clergymen, that I had never even dreamt were compatible with priestly sanctity, came to

notice. The most terrible shock of that year was to hear about a Sulpician Father who ran away with a woman. Only after careful investigation could I accept the story as true, for such "sad sacrileges" (the Church always conceals them) had never before reached my knowledge.

To cultivate pious hearts, rather than keen minds, is conspicuously the prime object of those who train Catholic youth for the priestly mission. The long hours of daily prayer and meditation always seemed to me very harmful, as the result is a sluggish brain and blinded mind. Uncertainties and mere possibilities are taught as dogmatically absolute, but the aspiring student, when doubting, always says "My professors know best." I consequently believed and obeyed them in everything. (Each student in a Catholic Seminary is assigned to or selects one of the professors, a priest, as his Director. To this Spiritual Director the aspirant for Holy Orders reveals his innermost thoughts, either in weekly confessions, or in private, secret, heart to heart talks, called "Direction.") On this Director devolves the duty

of deciding for a student whether or not he has the vocation to become a priest.)

Lying, stealing and swearing are not the usual sins of a seminarian—no one would expect them to be. Indeed, a seminarian rarely sins. He does, however, commit little infractions of the rigid rules that govern his every action, gets angry occasionally, and of course has his troubles with impure thoughts and desires. I might say right here that a seminarian is troubled relatively little with lustful passion, as he is kept physically and mentally tired by prayer and study, and is isolated from women. Still, he is a man physically perfect (no eunuch can become a priest), and every healthy, normal human being, man or woman, over eight years of age, from Holy Pope to orphan schoolboy, from stately Queen to bare-footed peasant lassie, has impure thoughts and desires.

As students for the priesthood, we knew that it was necessary, at any cost, to reduce our flesh to subjection. Various methods were adopted. When my nerves of passion twitched in that mys-

terious way which forebode danger, I forthwith sought a paper of needles and a little dish of salt which I kept in readiness for such emergencies. Whispering the prayer, "O Virgin Mary, Mother of Purity, intercede for me!" I scratched with three or four sharp needles deep into my bared breast, over my heart, a cross, and into the bleeding wound I put salt. The fires of concupiscence died out invariably, and my mind was forthwith at peace.

STULTIFYING CONSCIENCE.

Paris is a damp, dreary, cloudy city in December. The chill of the cheerless barracks called Grand Séminaire de St. Sulpice will never be forgotten. I had been warned of the discomforts of seminary life in Europe, yet how little I understood what it meant, till the trial came, to have hands half numb and covered with chilblains, day after day unable to take notes in class, and to live within four wet walls, trying to sleep at night, shivering between damp sheets, and by day vainly trying to light a fire in a broken stove. I maintain that physical endurance tests are ill-advised while the mind is battling with obscure theology.

On the 17th of December, 1896, America's Yellow Day of 1881 was duplicated in the French Capital, necessitating, till noon, a lamp to study with in my dingy, cold cell, which I left

with joy for the weekly promenade to Issy. pitying, as I departed, the students who stayed behind to prepare for the Christmas ordinations. After more than two months of misery and religious doubt I began to wish for the end of the world or death.

As we dragged our cassocks along the muddy streets, we met three chimney sweeps, black and dirty, hands, face and everything thick with soot. One carried a long coil of stout rope used in lowering the pigmy of the trio into the chimneys, the second carried on his back a sack filled with various sized brushes and certain necessary utensils for the trade, while behind these two trudged the tiniest midget that ever descended into a chimney, a waif of perhaps twelve years, who appeared to be about four. He was carrying with difficulty the big brush on top of which he was wont to be placed as weight, when it was lowered down a chimney. All three of that odd group were wretched appearing, but this little chap particularly was the most forsaken-looking human being I have ever seen. His pinched face looked

like a piece of coal, and it had about as much expression. He was dragging himself along as if he hadn't a friend in the universe. Maybe he had a bright mind. However, only on the last guess would one dare say so. Everything in the world looked black to him. He breathed dirt,—he ate it. If he ever thought of whence he came and whither he was going, it must have been easy for him to comprehend, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." I should think he would have felt happy to dream that some day he would be dust again, just ordinary dust, with no "poussière de charbon" as surplus. I wondered if he ever to himself had said, "Why am I a poor, puny chimney sweep?"

I little thought as I watched that queer, tiny, begrimed youngster, that within a few years I would wish I had been born in his place, or rather that I would willingly take his place in preference to being forced to stand before the world to play a part, to teach what in my heart I could not believe, in a word, to be a religious hypocrite. A thousand times better to be a frail, soot-covered

human-weight, than to live in exalted dishonesty!

One Sunday, a month later, I was on Montmartre when Cardinal Richard and six Bishops, with lay representatives from every Department of France, assembled to renew the National vow of dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I was looking at golden threaded copes and silken, purple cassocks, but I was thinking of a black, sooty blouse on a sickly Parisian chimney-sweep.

I once believed nearly everybody was good, that those who were not, never tried to be good, just out of guilty indifference, that the poor were poor because they simply were too lazy to work hard, and that if everyone became a Roman Catholic this world would be exactly as God meant it, relatively perfect. The sights, the sins, the sufferings, revealed in Paris, completely transformed me in one year.

The Summer of 1897 found me trying to forget theology, in order to banish the doubts that had arisen during my first ten months in ungodly Paris, where the religious atmosphere is nowise conducive to even mild faith. Saying to myself,

"Forget everything, you are young, and hard study has fatigued your brain,—three months' rest will clear your mind," I started in to see the sights of the charming Capital. One day found me sauntering leisurely along Les Grands Boulevards, looking in shop windows or admiring the stylishly dressed, "chic" men and women who were seated in the Cafés, the next slowly passing from cabinet to cabinet in the celebrated Musée de Cluny, curiously feeling every antique, in spite of the notices, "Défense de toucher." A day of complete rest would be followed by a drive to Longchamps, a trip to Versailles, or a stroll in Père-Lachaise Cemetery. With a "Baedeker" under my arm, I sought out everything that was worth seeing. Les Invalides, the Government Mint, Père-Lachaise crematory, Colonne de Juillet, Arc de Triomphe, and the Louvre's various "Salles," each had its peculiar power of chasing away all thoughts of theology.

Towards the end of July, I started to get complete rest at Lion-sur-Mer, a Summer resort on the coast of Normandy. Six pleasant weeks of

eating, sleeping, bathing, billiard playing and bicycling restored to a great extent my peace of mind on religious questions.

The only real painful shock of the Summer, to my religious sensibilities, was caused by a visit to La Délivrande, a town too small and too unimportant to be recognized in the gazetteer of Webster's dictionary. It is situated in Normandy, between Caen and Bayeux, about three kilometers from the seacoast. A little brochure, that I procured in the village, says the place "owes its origin, prosperity and glory to a celebrated sanctuary dedicated to the Queen of Heaven." I saw there what savored so much of heathenish idolatry that I no longer wonder Catholics are accused of making graven images to adore. (So far, the United States has escaped the baneful effects of pilgrimages and special shrines, but ere long we shall have our Notre Dame de New York, Notre Dame de Chicago, and Notre Dame de Butte, Montana, with all the accompanying faith-destroying and money-making features.)

My return to Paris in September was merely

to pack up my belongings and start south for Aix-en-Provence, to continue my studies there. My bishop's permission had of course been obtained. My health had seemingly been impaired, and I found that the damp climate of Winter in Paris made serious study an impossibility, especially at a seminary which was conducted, like most similar French and Italian institutions, on the principle, "La santé, ce n'est rien" (Health is nothing).

Aix-en-Provence is one of the most ancient cities of France, and was once renowned for its institutions of learning. The city has long since ceased to be a health resort, though the climate is about as mild as that of not distant Nice. The famed *Thermae Sextii* of the Romans, which were magnificent mineral baths in 123 B. C., still exist, and many a plunge therein refreshed my theology-clogged brain, during my two years in the Grand Seminary of Aix.

I had resolved to blind myself for two years to all religious difficulties. Nine months of theological study and three months of observation in

France had taught me that I could never be convinced by reasoning that the Roman Catholic Church is the one true church, to which God intended all men should belong. I determined to be a docile student, and to believe everything the Church taught. Justin McCarthy tells us, "Mr. Disraeli had always the faculty of persuading himself to believe or disbelieve anything according as he liked." I did not adopt that kind of false method of pretended belief or disbelief, but, rather, I accepted my Church's creeds on the grounds that, if I did not accept and force myself to believe what she taught, I would be compelled to set sail without compass, rudder or lead-line, on the vast, deep, black sea of religious uncertainty. I knew very many priests who seemed to believe everything the Church taught (mark well, I say *seemed*); I regarded them as wise, holy men.

The same order of exercises prevailed at Aix as at St. Sulpice in Paris. To bed regularly, up regularly, same long hours of listless praying, same hours of class.

It rained the first five days of October, so that when our opening retreat was over, our first weekly promenade revealed in magnificent verdure this Palestine-like part of France, where olive trees and fig trees, the mulberry and the almond, abound on beautifully terraced hills.

The nine months of class passed quickly. I learned things about polytheism, what the Jews' conception of God was, a little regarding Jansenism and other heresies, a great deal about Sacraments, went over a few centuries of Church History, in fine, touched on a variety of theological subjects that a priest needs to know something about for practical use. I employ purposely the words, "touched on" for, as Bishop Spalding says, in somewhat different language, our seminaries turn out merely good Sunday School teachers, not thorough and scholarly theologians. We are ordained priests with only a smattering of Scripture, and with only vague ideas of the great and important problems of theology, just enough to fool the multitudes who know nothing but their prayers and a few pages of catechism.

The weekly holiday always seemed to come barely in time to drive away dragging doubts. It was, indeed, a veritable Paradise to get out into the fresh air away from musty doctrine, and to be in touch with God's beautiful nature, for all Winter long we saw pinks, roses, pansies, Easter-daisies, and violets, blooming in the open, and as early as January 20th, almond trees were in blossom.

During my retreat for Minor Orders, I read the life of St. François de Sales. "He taught that ordinarily in the temptations against faith we must flee in order to conquer, rather than to fight and to reason." By following this advice I managed to retain enough faith to feel justified in successively accepting my "calls" to the Subdiaconate, Diaconate and Priesthood the following year.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF PARIS.

The Summer of 1898 I spent in travel, making a complete circuit of France. My object was to improve myself in the knowledge of the French language, and to learn all I could about the ways of the world, before I decided to take the final step, the solemn receiving of Holy Orders.

Marseilles, Tarascon, Montpélier, Toulouse, Carcassonne, Lourdes (I remained there for several weeks, including the time of the National Pilgrimage, when I saw what purported to be miracles; of all this more will be said at another time), Pau, Biarritz, St. Sebastian, Bordeaux, Poitiers, Tours, Blois and Orléans in turn shared my time. Repose, reflection, amusement and

study were the routine of each day, till at length I again found myself in Paris. I have never tired of the beautiful and pleasure-sated French Capital.

I was seated in the Madeleine at Vespers the first Sunday of this visit, when someone touched me on the shoulder, and said in a whisper, "Hello, Joel!" I turned, and there stood an old college-mate, whom I had not seen for three years. After Vespers we had a long talk. He had been in Europe several months, tutoring a young man, and was to sail in about a week for America.

We decided to see Paris, in the meantime, both inside and outside, but particularly inside. He was thinking of taking up studies for the priesthood, while I wanted to make sure that it would be wise for me to continue to the end. My supreme difficulty, I had concluded, was going to be celibacy, and I thought that if I exposed myself to temptations for a week and had no trouble to resist them, surely, with the superabundance of grace at ordination, I would forever be proof against love for woman.

No doubt, there was a little curiosity to see for ourselves, "just for the fun of it," some of the darker and more questionable sides of human existence, but our prime and chief motive was to test ourselves.

We both went to confession that night, and to Communion Monday morning, so as to start off fortified with all available grace.

Needless to say, we spent no time studying the architecture of churches. One night we tried the "Olympia," to see what effect a French Burlesque would have on us, and to learn the intricacies of self-control while talking with pretty French ladies of fashion, who have a faculty of getting acquainted without long or complicated formalities. Next night we dashed up to the Moulin Rouge to try a liqueur and café noir, while gazing at the "human form divine" of many smiling, flitting creatures, who thought that their thoughts were our thoughts, and so invited themselves to have a drink with us.

We saw humbug performances at places known in those days, as L'Enfer and Le Ciel. Th

were harmless holes, as far as we were concerned, though some of the Elysian maidens were "wrapt only in thought," and a few other accessories common to the wardrobes of those seeking leadership in society, where the fashion is scant attire.

I shall not enumerate the passing frivolities of strolls along the principal avenues, or of enjoyable visits to the Jardin de Paris, or of nightly rides, up the Boulevard St. Germain, to the Latin Quarter, where we indulged in new flirtations.

One night after the Grand Opera we took a midnight supper at Maxim's, where I heard for the first time, "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," by a Venetian Orchestra. There, the usual demi-monde gaiety prevailed.

No need of further detail, except to say we only smoked and drank enough so that two smooth-faced, innocent-looking youths might not appear too awkward or too saintly in unseemly places, at unseemly hours. Our experience did us both good, I think. My mind became reassured, for we had run the gauntlet in safety. No woman's charms could ever interfere with my per-

fect self-control, I was persuaded, not, of course, that I expected evil thoughts would never haunt me in the future, or that my passion would forever subside. I flattered myself that in spite of weak flesh, a willing spirit is well-nigh invincible, and I had the willing spirit, I believed.

Fontainebleau, Vichy, Moulins, Paray-le-Monial, Ars, Lyons, Grenoble, La Grande Chartreuse and Avignon were all visited on my southward journey to Aix-en-Provence, where only nine months stood between me and the priesthood.

I was shocked at Paray-le-Monial to learn the absurd pretenses of the Church regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

I stood in the garden and in the convent where Christ is claimed to have manifested Himself, and spoken to the nun, Marguerite Marie Alacoque, seventy times from 1672 up to October 17th, 1690. She claimed He said He wanted to reign under the symbol of His Sacred Heart. The conditions named were very explicit. The first is, said our Lord, "The consecration that he

(Louis XIV) will make of himself to my adorable Heart, which wishes to triumph over his. He (Christ) wishes to reign in his (Louis's) palace, to be painted on his standards, and engraved on his arms, to make them victorious over all his enemies." Finally, the monarch ought, "To have built an edifice, where there would be a picture of this divine Heart, to receive there the consecration and the homage of the King and of the Court."

Would it not make you heartsick to have the Jesuit Father Joseph Zelle tell you that because these "supreme requirements" were ignored the French Revolution broke out, and that since then France has been unstable?

Is it any wonder Frenchmen have no religion? They are told God appeared at Paray-le-Monial with orders to Louis XIV to have Sacred Hearts painted on the National Flag, and Sacred Hearts on rifles, revolvers, cannons and sabres; then he would be victorious over other kings in war. Forsooth!

After the Franco-Prussian War the clergy said,

in effect, "Just as we told you, we did not have the Sacred Heart on our flags, or on our arms, nor did we build the temple for the Sacred Heart. That is why we lost Alsace-Lorraine." During the three or four years following the War, while the effects of the defeat lasted, many pious men and women went on pilgrimages to Paray-le-Monial, and the present fine Church that surmounts Montmartre, Paris, was begun as a National Shrine of the Sacred Heart. When I was at the anniversary feast of this Church in 1897, tracts were being distributed, urging the Government to add to the "Drapeau Tricolore," the present National Flag, a Sacred Heart, according to Christ's orders. Otherwise, no grace or prosperity can ever be expected for France. Is not that a naïve lot of legend to nourish the souls of intelligent Frenchmen?

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, which may be commendable and void of superstition when rightly interpreted, has unfortunately interwoven with the history of its first appearance statements that in the light of our day seem ridiculous, and

tend only to belittle God, who is pictured as struggling to win Frenchmen to His Heart by promises of National Victory in war.

I see no objection to special visions and revelations from God. On the contrary, there are not enough genuine, extraordinary manifestations of the Monarch on High nowadays, or rather it seems so to the multitudes who are groping in darkness, craving to know exactly the Way and the Truth. However, that is God's business and I think He knows best.

I spent three days in the famous monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, and while there went to confession to one of the monks. In fact, I made a general confession of my whole life, including everything about my special week seeing Paris. Though that experience had seemed justifiable, I felt afterwards it was sinful to have exposed myself to such dangers, because even with a very virtuous companion, a man's thoughts may become uncontrollable, face to face with life's greatest seductions. One may profit by a few days among the semi-anchoretic and cenobitic succes-

sors of Saint Bruno. I certainly did, and as the heavy coach rolled down the mountain side to St. Laurent-du-Pont my heart was light, and life seemed sweet and suave.

Once again I was back in my tile-paved chamber at the Seminary, ready for hard, patient work. I refused to consider or weigh any arguments against my religion. It would be a waste of time that I needed for the urgent studies then crowding upon me. I resolved to be stubbornly blind to everything that detracted in the least from the truth, power and glory of Roman Catholic teachings and practices. The Church demands such unstinted submission from advanced seminarians and priests, just as She does from the ignorant laborer.

Ingenuous is undoubtedly the one adjective that most perfectly describes what a seminarian of the Catholic Church must be. Let a student possess forty fine qualities, and lack being ingenuous, there is no place for him within the walls where men begin to study God in Scripture and tradition. Unless he continues to be, at least to some

degree, ingenuous for four years, he is not likely ever to become a priest. Webster defines thus, "One who is ingenuous is actuated by a native simplicity and artlessness." I use the word in this good sense, devoid of irony, though I am fully aware that the ingenuous usually are so unsophisticated as to be easily gullible.

I was ingenuous when I entered the seminary at Montreal, and I continued so at Paris, and at Aix-en-Provence in diminishing degrees. While I am still ingenuous to this day, I find it impossible honestly to accept all the Church believes and teaches, as her doctrines have been interpreted to me in the seminary.

Shortly after having been made deacon, I obtained a fortnight's leave of absence to visit Rome. It was quite extraordinary in French seminaries, a few years ago, to give vacations, other than the summer one, except in cases of illness. Partly because my last year of theology was nearly over, and partly because I was somewhat "run down," I was favored.

It was Easter time, and I looked forward to

the opportunity of witnessing grand ceremonies rather than of beholding in wonderment classic ruins and antique works of art. However, I made hurried visits to nearly every noted piazza, palazzo, and chiesa. Those "grand ceremonies," I had expected to enjoy, were a series of empty, undignified manœuvres by a slovenly, indifferent lot of ecclesiastics who appeared utterly devoid of real piety. The little devotion manifested by the people in general was not of a kind either to inspire in visitors firmer belief or even to sustain existing faith.

I recall with pleasure the joyful greeting, "Buona Pasqua," that flowed from every lip on Easter Sunday, but with sorrow I remember that from the walls of every church and from the depths of every heart seemed to issue the cold, gloomy words, "Ruin, Ruin, Ruin!" Ah! yes, faith is dead in Rome; there is no more appropriate place on earth for the headquarters of ruined Catholicism than in the midst of the dilapidated monuments along the Tiber.

I prayed at the tomb of St. Peter and climbed

the Scala Sancta on my knees, but I left Rome, as Hawthorne did, "disgusted with the pretense of holiness" and "crushed down in spirit by the desolation of her ruin and the hopelessness of her future."

I always observed the seminary rules satisfactorily, and my theological studies were passably prepared. No more convincing proof is necessary than that I passed successfully through the degrees of initiation, Tonsure, Minor Orders, Subdeaconship, and Deaconship, and finally on June 29th, 1899, I received Holy Orders, in the Metropolitan Basilica of Aix-en-Provence, from His Grace, Archbishop Gouthé Soulard. Three days later I celebrated my first Mass in the beautiful Basilica of Lourdes, being the first American priest to say his first Mass, after ordination, within this world-famed shrine of international pilgrimages.

After six weeks of travel in France, England and Ireland, I started for the United States. My priestly career had begun auspiciously, if ever one did. Three years of separation from dear

ones had ended with the fulfillment of my most sanguine hopes, and I was on my way home rejoicing, healthy and enthusiastic. My sole ambition in life was to make all men feel happy, and always wear a God-loving, God-fearing smile.

The feelings of my heart upon becoming a priest are reflected in the two verses of Scripture which I selected for my ordination souvenir cards, "Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day; and the same forever,—” Heb. XIII—8; "The spirit of the Lord is upon me! Wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart,—” Isaias LXI—1; Luke IV—18.

The same sentiments animated my whole being on beginning my practical life as a priest in a country parish of fifteen hundred souls, with a mission five miles away of three hundred more. In less than a year and a half I was assigned to a large East Side parish, in New York City. After a few months there, my attention was called to the prospects of getting into the United

States Navy, as a Chaplain. My application was favorably considered, and President McKinley signed my commission, dating from June 10th, 1901.

During the two years of active, priestly duties in parishes, I had time to review my studies and to reflect. Hearing confessions had revealed to me the prevalence, from youngest to oldest, highest to lowest in society, in men, women and children alike, of such repeated violations of every one of the ten Commandments, that I was simply appalled. Worse than this, instead of finding priests an aggregation of saints, whose thoughts were only on the sanctification of souls, I found nearly all intensely wrapped up in material prosperity, shunning all kinds of mortification, many of them vain, large numbers absolutely refusing even to speak to certain of their brethren, curates grumbling because their pastors were taking all the Requiem Masses (they mean at least five or ten dollars each for the priest by whom they are said), repeated scandals because of violated vows of celibacy, ugliness toward parishioners and ex-

tortionate methods to get Baptismal money and Christmas and Easter offerings; all of these things made me realize why we had been told so often, during the course of our studies, not to be like the priests we would meet in the world, but, rather, to follow out the lofty teachings of the seminary.

Maybe I had in my mind the ideals of what a priest ought to be, and that I had expected to see reproduced Christ, the prototype, which of course is impossible. At any rate great was my disappointment. The theories I had learned were beautiful, but I failed to see that the Roman Catholic Church was producing more Godly clergymen and laymen than other forms of religion.

In spite of my criticisms of priests, it must not be forgotten that I regard them, on the whole, as superior and benevolent men, honestly and zealously working in the way which they consider most expedient for the welfare of the human race. I emphasize the word expedient, because it is expediency that holds to their religion the majority of priests. While it is somewhat ex-

traneous, I cannot refrain from speaking a word of praise for the Roman Catholic nun. There is not a nobler character in the world than she, not a holier, more self-sacrificing, more Godly man or woman anywhere. No creature is nearer to God than she, no one working more devotedly to brighten lives on earth, and to prepare souls for eternity. All honor to the Church of Rome for producing such a character!

"DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE."

Up to the time of entering the United States Navy, my exterior conduct, as far as my Superiors could observe, had been above reproach; indeed, I seemed a holy and zealous man. When His Grace, Archbishop Corrigan, assigned me to duty, he wrote this note to Father Kean, "I am sending you an excellent young priest," etc. Father Kean subsequently recommended me in these words, "He is a very good, zealous, talented and estimable priest. * * * He has performed his duties most faithfully and cheerfully." Father Lehy, formerly President of Holy Cross College, wrote at the end of my course this letter, "We take great pleasure in recommending Joseph F. MacGrail of this year's graduating class. His standing in class has always been

high, and we have always assigned him positions of trust and honor." Father John Power, V.G., my lifelong Pastor, wrote on September 23rd, 1895, in a letter of recommendation, "I am only too happy to state that I have nothing to say of you but what is good, that I have always considered you one of the best boys of my Sunday School, and one of the best young men in my parish." This opinion was not changed on February 22nd, 1901, when he wrote to Senator Hoar, the following letter.

WORCESTER, MASS., Feb. 22nd, 1901.

HON. GEORGE F. HOAR,
United States Senator.

My Dear Friend:—

This is to introduce to you the Rev. Joseph F. MacGrail of Worcester, who asks me to secure your valuable services in his behalf for a Chaplaincy in the United States Navy that is about to be made vacant within a month. I have known him from childhood, and feel warranted in speaking emphatically of his worth and capabilities. I know the almost incessant calls made on a man in your position, and I have all the more hesitancy in writing to you in this matter, but he is a Worcester young man, stands well with the authorities of his Church, and I personally take great interest in his welfare. He has most excellent letters to show.

Can you, in your kindness of heart, exert any influence upon the President or others that will help him. If so, I shall once more sign myself,

Your grateful and obliged friend,
(Signed) JNO. J. POWER, V.G.

Although my own Bishop, Most Rev. Thomas D. Beaven of Springfield, Massachusetts, had written letters of recommendation to Cardinal Gibbons, and to President McKinley, favoring my appointment to the United States Navy, Senator Hoar also added his kind recommendation. His letter follows:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Feb. 26th, 1901.

SIR:—

The Rev. Joseph F. MacGrail, of Worcester, Mass., is desirous of being appointed Chaplain in the Navy. He is a Catholic Clergyman. He seems to be a very intelligent man, in the vigor of youthful health. He is highly recommended by my friend, Father John J. Power, Vicar General of Massachusetts, and by the Right Rev. Monsignor Conaty, the Head of the Catholic University here. I am told that there is still a very much smaller proportion of Catholic Clergymen in the Navy than there is of Catholics among the Sailors. If that be true, I presume you will like so far as may be done without injury to the service, to give this denomination of Christians its fair share of the Clergymen.

I have the honor to be, with high regard, faithfully
yours,

(Signed) GEORGE F. HOAR.

The President.

My innate pride prompts me to rejoice in these words of praise, yet in reality they are a reproach to me, because by contrast with my subsequent, dissipated life they bring up that oft repeated, sad story, "It might have been." In my mind, too, the downfall of those favored by every advantage in youth is doubly disgraceful.

It may not be modest to affirm that during the first twenty-seven years of my life I fought hard to merit such encomiums as I have quoted. Interiorly and exteriorly I was a pure, honest, God-fearing man. Besides, I never had smoked or taken intoxicating liquors, excepting at rare intervals during my sojourn in France. When I returned from abroad, a priest, I refused to play cards, even in my own home, believing such diversion a loss of valuable time, as well as being a sure road to gambling.

By degrees only do our convictions change in religious matters. No single scandal, no one newly learned fact of history, no isolated, surprising condition peculiar to a particular people, can influence either weak or strong minds to deny

the old religion of childhood, or to accept suddenly a new form of worship, but a series of novel and irreconcilable actualities hurled, month after month, against a serious thinker leave indentations, which finally become so numerous as to produce a complete metamorphosis of the mind. Each blow is felt, but the mark left is forgotten, or escapes notice, in the hasty course of events. Sooner or later, however, a man perceives that the structure built by faith is tottering or already in ruins. Then he begins to sin. Some become sinful and then strive to destroy the foundations of the morality on which is based the sinfulness of their actions; others, seeing those foundations crumble through disbelief, fall into sin without remorse, and almost with malicious deliberation. To the latter class I belong.

Right here I must make the most painful and most shameful confession of my life,—I accepted a commission in the United States Navy, as a Roman Catholic priest, knowing I had no faith, and realizing that my soul was tainted with sins of impurity.

Fully ten months before I received my appointment to the Navy I had asked my Bishop for an "Exeat," that is, permission to go to another diocese. I wished to get away from my family and old friends, intending after a time to enter a religious order abroad, and then, when I had been forgotten, to walk out into the world and quietly begin life an honest man. Why such an unholy, insincere, underhanded proceeding you ask? Simply because a priest can *never* resign from the priesthood. Simply because conscience is subordinate to the mandates of the Church. Roman Catholics are so imbued with these ideas, that a priest who honestly gives up his religion is a monster in their eyes, more guilty than Judas, and little less deserving of divine mercy than Satan himself. He becomes a vile and detested reprobate, loathed by former Catholic friends and relatives, and at his shattered soul is hurled the Church's anathema, "Pereat,"—"Before all men let him be forever an outcast, and before God let him be eternally damned."

"Qui fidem sub Ecclesiae magisterio suscep-

erunt, nullam unquam habere possunt justam causam mutandi, aut in dubium fidem eandam revocandi,—De fide est,”—Page 437, Volume 1, Bonal—(He, who, under the tutorship of the Church, has received his faith, can never, at any time, have just cause of changing or calling into doubt that same faith,—This is of faith). Likewise in the Pontifical letter called “Syllabus” by Pius IX, December 8th, 1864, is condemned the proposition, “Liberum cuique homini est eam amplecti ac profiteri Religionem, quam rationis lumine quis ductus veram putaverit,”—(Man is free to embrace and to profess the religion which, led by the light of reason, he shall think to be the true one.) Conscience is therefore nothing. I ask frankly who gave me conscience? Is not conscience just as divine as any Scripture? I declare that it is, and so long as I can remain, or try to remain, true to my conscience, I have no fear of God or man. May that Supreme Being, who endowed me with a spark of mystery called soul, and created me to serve His will, henceforth guide me by the divine light which I

know he never gave to confuse and to damn me, but rather to draw me nearer to His own divine person!

I was a weak-willed man not to have renounced my faith when I no longer believed, and my punishment came in the form of a dishonorable discharge from the United States Navy, leastwise, it pleases me to view the matter thus. Let the earthly judges of my character be somewhat lenient, remembering I was trained to believe that it was an unpardonable, hell-deserving sin to renounce my faith *under any conditions*, and that to take the wife I craved was condemned, by the authorities whom I regarded to be divine ambassadors, as accepting a sacrilegious concubine who could beget me only bastards. What rendered me helpless in the last degree was to realize that those who were dearer to me than life itself would be dishonored, and heartbroken, ignoring me as the source of their agonies, if I manfully renounced my false allegiance to Rome. Enough! Enough!

I must not forget, at this moment, to exonerate

completely the United States Navy as having participated, even in a minor degree, in my downfall. Many relatives and friends think the Navy is immoral, and that I was misled. This is false. To my shame be it said that I entered the Navy an unworthy man, and, if harm was done, I was the culpable party, for before I had been a Chaplain one year, I was guilty of most questionable conduct, and most dangerous example.

While I had tried to avoid doing anything to injure or scandalize others, I had concluded to live a free and easy life, even before I became a Chaplain. I was condemned to Hell if I left the Church, I was told, and as I knew of no worse place to go if I remained in the Church sinfully, I decided on that penny-wise pound-foolish advice, get the game with the name. I am bitter against Roman Catholicism, because by its teachings utter ruin is deliberately planned for those who refuse to submit to immoral dictates. At one time Rome openly put to death those who could not conscientiously believe her dogmas, and to-day, even, she consigns to Hell by her

anathemas those who ask to serve God according to their honest convictions. It is not manly for me to make excuses for my conduct of the past five years, nor can I blame either the Church or religion for many unfortunate escapades. Rum has played its dreadful role, yet I maintain it was not drink that ruined me. It merely revealed the ruin. In reality, I owe a debt of gratitude to the flowing bowl, for it has at last dragged me to where I must, to where I can, be a man. A sad, but striking, paradox.

A frequent admonition to seminarians, for their future guidance in the priesthood, is "never to be 'solus cum sola' " (alone with a woman). During my whole life, up to my arrival in St. James' parish, New York City, I had been strictly faithful to this rule. Needless to say that I, like most young priests, always had a keen curiosity which had never been gratified, though nature at times burned with fury.

One cold evening in March, I left the parish house with a civilian's collar and necktie hidden in my coat pocket. I boarded a Third Avenue

Elevated train at Chatham Square, and went uptown to where, I had learned, the demi-mondaines were numerous, and there I sought a dark corner of a certain street to make a lightning change, which would transform me from a clergyman to a "sport." At least, I planned to be a sport for a few hours. A crankism of Lisle de Vaux runs, "When we get what we want, we are always disappointed to find it is not what we wanted." This quotation is appropriate for my case. As I turned homeward, late that night, there was only melancholy in my soul. Man's thought soon returns, however, to the anticipated raptures of passion, forgetful of the reactionary sadness. So it was with me, anyway, and during the next four months, more than once, I sought forbidden pleasures.

LIFE IN THE NAVY; COURT-MARTIALED.

My first assignment to duty in the United States Navy was aboard the Training Ship "Dixie." We started shortly for a sojourn in Europe. The voyage across was somewhat rough; therefore, my inactivity was attributed to nausea. I was perfectly contented to appear seasick. My fellow-officers could scarcely have guessed the truth, that the new chaplain, just before joining his ship, had unwisely spent a night in "unrestrained joy;" and there are penalties.

While there was no justification for my accepting a position of honor and trust in the United States Navy as Chaplain, when I realized I was a fakir and a hypocrite, still I retained the faint hope that with the minimum of priestly duties (I

always felt excessive prayers and devotions had materially helped to kill my faith) I might become an upright and useful "Sky Pilot." It was all a delusion. I gradually began to indulge in every pleasure I fancied, and it was not long before I was known as a pretty gay Chaplain. To be sure, I said Mass every Sunday morning for those of the landsmen, the marines, the Ship's company and the Officers who cared to attend. I preached a weekly sermon, and gave occasional lectures. I told the men always to feel free to come to me in their troubles for advice and consolation. I really felt interested in the men and found them an excellent lot, but my utter lack of faith in my religion tended to make me neglect them, and to cause me to be dejected. I realized what a hypocrite I was, and what a coward not to come right out like a man and resign, both from the Navy and the Priesthood.

In wine, women and gambling I found means of distraction. It was not hard to play a double rôle, even though I knew many of the officers, and most of the crew, must have grave sus-

pitions. Of course, I was not brazen about my misdemeanors, and if anyone expressed surprise at my lax living, I feigned a wounded feeling and said, "Honi soit qui mal y pense." The "Dixie" was called a converted cruiser, but that was not because she had me for a chaplain. My example tended to make an inverted cruiser out of her.

By the time we reached Villefranche all hands were prepared for about anything, so my almost nightly visits to the Casino at Monte Carlo were merely a subject for jokes, not amazement. I played regularly and left at the end of two weeks about one hundred dollars winner. (I was told a year later, by Chaplain Jones, U.S.N., who was attached to the "Monongahela," and at Villefranche while the "Dixie" was there, that he had paid fifty dollars, out of his own pocket, to an English correspondent, who had written me up for gambling, not to publish the story. It was surely a very friendly act, but as I thought it might be a fish-story, I never offered to reimburse the Chaplain.)

One day I would dine with a demi-mondaine, and the next day with an Archbishop. What I did not see in Europe of high life and low life was not worth seeing. In spite of it all, I prepared seven men and an officer for Confirmation, and Archbishop Timoni of Smyrna conferred the Sacrament on board ship, the first and only time that such an occurrence has taken place on a ship of the United States Navy. To signify his pleasure the Archbishop made me a Canon of his Cathedral.

I heard nearly fifty confessions on Christmas eve, my first year at sea, then went to the ward-room, where the officers were having a Christmas-tree, and joined in clinking glasses. I had a frightful headache the next morning, about the only time I have ever had one from drinking, but I said Mass and gave Communion. On all such occasions as saying Mass and administering Sacraments, I never failed to preface my actions with the intention of "doing what the Church intended," which procedure, it is claimed, makes the acts of priests without faith valid, though they

might otherwise be invalid. As regards hearing confessions, I pride myself on never having been careless or hasty, even to the very day I voluntarily left the Church. I always pronounced with fervor and exactness the prayer of absolution, and if anything ever held me to the Roman Catholic Church it was the Confessional, and if anything can ever get me back into the fold, it will be the high regard I have for the sanctity and helpfulness to sinners of the Confessional.

My first annual report to the Navy Department follows :—

U. S. S. "Panther,"
Island of Culebra, near Puerto Rico.

SIR :—

In accordance with article 764 of the regulations, I herein make the following annual report.

The first six months of the year 1902 were spent on board the U. S. S. "Dixie," Captain R. M. Berry commanding, and the last six months on the U. S. S. "Panther," Commander J. C. Wilson, commanding.

On every Sunday, excepting a few when stormy weather prevented or extra duty kept all hands at work, I have held the regular service of the Roman Catholic Church at half-past ten in the morning. This service consisted of Mass, Reading of the Epistle and Gospel of the Sunday, a sermon, and a few prayers at the close. Part of the time I have had music by the Ship's band, and part of the time singing by members of the Ship's company.

On the "Dixie" I taught advanced French to six of the

officers, and elementary French to two officers and to three petty officers.

On the "Dixie" also I arranged for a Minstrel Show, with the help of Ensign Henderson, and as well for two variety entertainments, in all of which the Ship's company participated.

The management of a Ball Nine devolved upon me while on the "Dixie," and several times I accompanied the men ashore to play.

Both on the "Dixie" and on the "Panther" I have prepared and delivered a few lectures on places of interest we have visited.

In June last I officiated at the burial service of an Apprentice boy by the name of Miller, who was drowned at the League Island Navy Yard, and again in December I performed the last rites over a Ship's Cook, named McCabe, drowned at San Juan, Porto Rico.

I am much pleased with the facilities my commanding officers have afforded me at all times in fulfilling my duties, and with the congenial co-operation of all my fellow-officers in anything I undertook or suggested to make Ship's life pleasant for the crew.

At various times I have been aboard the "Essex," the "Monongahela," the "Chicago" and the "Prairie" to hold religious services. Frequently, with the consent of the Captain, I have had ministers of different denominations on board to officiate.

I would recommend that the Department make some provision to supply books and other necessary material to the Chaplains who desire to organize classes in history, (all modern history, but United States' in particular), in English, in rudimentary physics or in any other branch. I would not like to see all Chaplains forced to teach, thereby making schoolmasters of them, but in many cases, with proper facilities, Chaplains would gladly instruct in other matters as well as in religion.

Respectfully,

(Signed) JOSEPH F. MACGRAIL,
Chaplain U. S. Navy.

Secretary of the Navy.

The impressions and experiences of long cruising in the West Indies, including the Martinique Relief Expedition, and a hurried trip, aboard the U. S. S. "Panther," to Central America, where our interests were jeopardized by the Honduras Revolution of 1903, must be left for the more complete record of my inner life, that will appear in a less abridged form of book, bearing the same title as this story. Estimates of the American Naval Line officers and of the blue jackets, of the Chaplains' corps, and of the other Staff corps must likewise be deferred. While praise will predominate in my contemplated criticisms there will be friendly reproaches that, even though justifiable, may wound a little. Excepting in rare instances, my personal relations with both officers and men have been such as to leave the very pleasantest recollections. I have only love and admiration for the American Navy. Such noble types of men as Rear Admiral R. M. Berry, Captain C. P. Rees, Commanders J. P. Parker and York Noel cannot be excelled anywhere, and our Navy is full of their like.

I requested orders to the Asiatic Station when the "Panther" went out of commission in the Fall of 1903. I had determined to begin all over, and try again to be an upright, virtuous man, but making, however, the same restriction as the little boy who did not raise his hand when the teacher asked "How many children want to go to Heaven?" He answered her question, "Don't you want to go to Heaven, Tommy?" by the reply "Not yet." I resolved to be good, but "not yet," not till I reached Manila. I planned on a gay time crossing the Continent to San Francisco; my plans were carried out, though one day's incarceration, while intoxicated, for threatening to kill every Mormon in Salt Lake City had not been included in the original order of exercises. I had taken a few Rye High-balls before and after visiting the Tabernacle. The last thing I remember was treating some strangers at a near-by saloon. I may have been drugged, though I missed only a little money, which I might have spent, after losing full possession of my faculties. I have no recollection

of being arrested, but I awoke at night in a vile old cellar, where about twenty-five prisoners were confined. It was a most trying ordeal to wait until two o'clock the following day for Court. A kind, young Judge listened to my story of probably having been drugged, and learning I had a ticket for San Francisco, discharged me with the remark, "You don't look like a man who ought to be here." With thanks I departed, after receiving back the contents of my searched pockets, and my battered tall hat.

This terrible occurrence prompted me to go to confession, in San Francisco, to a Paulist Father. In tears, I laid my whole life before him. He was perceptibly touched, and urged me to resign from the Navy. I conceded I felt my duty was to leave both Navy and Church, for I realized full well it would be only a question of time till fatal disaster would overtake me. But the old dread came over me of disgracing my family by giving up the Church, so I resolved to drift along and try to avoid detection in my sins. I felt the Government could better afford to pay me than

could the hard working parishioners of any place to which my Bishop might send me; and in the Navy I could, moreover, have an enjoyable time, week in and week out, because the Chaplaincy is most certainly a sinecure.

My tale might well end here. I did not change my mode of living when I reached the Orient. Manila saw much of my merry dissipation, and Hong Kong came in for a share, during the month I spent there on the Battleship "Oregon."

In July, 1904, began a long drawn out court-martial. I was not guilty of all I was charged with, nor was it possible to prove conclusively that I was guilty of anything. Navy court-martials, however, are not convened to prove a man guilty, but to let a man prove he is innocent. I rightly deserved the sentence of the Court, nevertheless. The Buddhist Rear Admiral Folger (under oath he testified to being of this religious denomination) resorted to malicious means of prosecution and showed himself very prejudiced, but I really think myself, that I, in his place, would have had little more consider-

ation, than he had, for such a religious hypocrite as I was. The officers of my Court were all very fair; excepting the Judge Advocate at times was bitter, and resorted to what seemed questionable tactics. He was under a great strain and may be pardoned. The charges and specifications against me, if printed, I fear would have to be sent by express, unless the postal authorities suspended the usual regulations. Briefly, all may be summed up in the words, "Too much devotion to wine and women." I endeavored to resign from the Navy before the trial, but to no purpose.

ROME RENOUNCED; PAYING THE PENALTY.

Now comes the singular part of my whole career. Even after the approval of the Court's sentence, that I be dismissed from the Navy without honor, my standing in the Roman Catholic Church was never affected, though my Bishop had learned fully of my offenses. Although I was not assigned to a permanent parish at once, I went on administering the Sacraments, and saying Mass, like any other priest. At Easter-time I was officially ordered by my Bishop to Oxford, Massachusetts, to assist Father Hafey, the Pastor, as the following letter shows:

ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL,
Springfield, Mass., April 13, 1905.

Rev. and Dear Sir:

You will go to Oxford next Saturday morning and assist Fr. Hafey till Easter Monday.

Sincerely Yrs. in Xt

THOS. D. BEAVEN,
Bishop of Springfield.

I spent two busy weeks there, drew my salary and went home feeling triumphant. I had merely been waiting patiently for such an assignment to duty, so to have proof that the Church accepted me as of good standing, thereby enabling me to go manfully and voluntarily to the Bishop and say, "I have no faith—I am going to leave the Church." This I did in June of the year 1905. I felt a little consolation in having been able to renounce freely, and not out of necessity, my ill-starred priesthood. It is a shameful outrage that a man is not allowed to resign honorably before he is submerged in sin, and, in my mind, the Church deserves all the disgrace that arises from such unholy laws.

During the past year, in New York City, I managed to retain an honorable position as a librarian, but frequent recourse to drink has more than once landed me in the Courtroom for drunkenness.

"There's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion."

—"Don Juan" by Byron.

I might allege that my unhappy plight had driven me to drink; it would be truer to say I have sought exhilaration in wine from weakness. Henceforth, having spoken my mind, though the way be rough and hard to climb, I know I can and shall be a man. I propose to regain all the honor I have lost and far more. "From the lowliest depth there is a path to the loftiest height."—Carlyle.

What, then, is my mental attitude, to-day, towards Church and religion? I do not firmly believe, without doubt, that the personage known to history as Jesus Christ was the Creator of the Universe and is now its Ruler, while, nevertheless, accepting Him as an extraordinary mortal of marvelous power and virtue. Neither do I firmly believe, without doubt, that the Roman Catholic Church is the infallible source of moral truth, while, however, recognizing in her an influence which has greatly benefited part of the human race. My vow of chastity and promise of obedience in promulgating Rome's teachings both hinged on my belief in the divinity of

Christ, and the divine appointment of the Roman Catholic Church to be forever the one and only supremely authorized teacher on earth of eternal truth. During three years I lived from minute to minute a black, deliberate lie, by pretending to believe in certain doctrines and practices, and by teaching them to others. I was a coward and a mercenary menial of the lowest type to have done so, and I accept every affliction, that has been visited upon me, as the merited punishment of my lying, religious hypocrisy.

I may be wrong now, absolutely speaking, in my convictions; my judgment may be utterly deceiving me; yet the irresistible and uncompromising fact of disbelief holds fast every part of my mind and soul. Let my conscience be diagnosed by the subtle casuist as false, or what he will, a diagnosis does not change the actual fact that I disbelieve. To follow my God-given conscience is now the highest rule of action that I know. That conscience, with the truths of study and experience at hand, tells me the Church cannot be divine and infallible which (I) teaches

and encourages priests to live the life of religious hypocrites, when they cease to have faith in their religion, and refuses absolutely to let them resign honorably from their profession; which (2) compels priests to pose as chaste men when they find it impossible to live a life of celibacy; which (3) defines, as infallible truths, the doctrines "*Unam esse fidelium universalem Ecclesiam, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur,—*" Conc. Later. IV,—*De fide est—*(There is only one universal Church of the faithful, out of which no one can at all be saved,—IV Lateran Council,—It is of faith), and, "*Parvulus, decedens cum originali peccato, punitur poena damni aeterna,—*"—*De fide est—*(A little child, dying in original sin, is punished with the eternal pain of the damned,—It is of faith) : [Rome teaches all are born in original sin, which only Baptism can blot out, and therefore innocent, unbaptized babes must go to Hell]; and which (4) encourages and participates in such atrocities as the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church by no

means has a just or sole claim to the marks by which she contends the true Church may be recognized. Christianity has *unity* neither of organization, faith, teaching, discipline, prayer nor sacramental grace; *holiness* is no more conspicuous in the Church of Rome than in the Church of England; Rome's only pretext for calling herself *Catholic* is because she claims universal jurisdiction (claiming and having are quite different); as to being *apostolic* the Roman Church may have some title, but the Greek Church has more convincing historical proof that it is also apostolic.

It is paradoxical and sadly disturbing to my mind to find so many instances in which one "Alter Christus" (Another Christ) is not only lacking love for, but bitterly hateful towards, another "Alter Christus", as a priest is theologically known. The decadence of the Church in Europe, its lack of genuine supremacy anywhere, even in a single Country of the world (Supremacy in name counts for nothing), the inexplicable tangle and incomprehensible mixture

of scientific errors, hyperboles, fiction and truth in Scripture, and lastly, the confounding teaching that a lie may be lawful for a just cause, one of which is "The Glory of God," are added reasons for my turning from the Roman Catholic Church. How am I to know what is the real meaning of Rome's doctrines if she maintains she has a right to deceive me for "The Glory of God?"

Can I, moreover, for a moment, accept as divine a Church which consigns to a Hell of everlasting torments Gladstone and Senator Hoar, and has the same fate prepared for President Roosevelt, unless he becomes a Roman Catholic before his death? No, never! I see indignation, now, in the eye of even the novice theologian, who wants to say my assertion is false, because the Church qualifies by the distinction, non-catholics are saved if they are "in good faith." Bosh! What has that to do with the cases I purposely selected? If we accept the dogma "out of the Church of Rome there is no salvation," it may be reasonable to apply the subtle "being-in-good-faith" condition to many people of little learning

or, narrow environment, but it is plainly either impeaching God's veracity, or making a cruel and impossible God out of the Lord, to apply the "being-in-good-faith" rule to the eminent men in question. Brownson, a devout convert to Catholicism and an able theologian, has put the matter so logically and forcibly that I must quote him. "It is said that those without (the Church) are simply bound to seek, and that we can deny them the possibility of salvation only on the condition that they do not seek. Be it so. But if they are bound to seek, it is because Almighty God commands them to seek, and gives them the grace which enables them to seek; and who is prepared to say, if they seek *cauta sollicitudine*, as St. Augustine makes it necessary for them to do, that they will not find? *If God commands them to seek they can find; for He never commands one to seek in vain.* 'Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you—for everyone that seeketh findeth, and to everyone that knocketh it shall be opened.' *It is fair then to conclude, if there is one who does not find, to*

whom it is not opened, that he is one that does not seek, he is out of the Church by his own fault. The grace of prayer is given unto everyone, and everyone can pray, and if he does he shall receive; and it would impeach both the wisdom and the veracity of God to maintain the contrary." Hence, either Gladstone and Senator Hoar are in Hell, and Roosevelt is going there, if he does not become a Catholic, or God is a liar, or the Roman Catholic Church is not the one and only true Church. The first two propositions being absolutely and absurdly false, it follows that the Church of Rome is in error, and is not the one and only true Church.

As the profound and scholarly Rev. William Thurston Brown says, in a wonderful sermon, "The Real Religion of To-day," "No God is a great deal better than an immoral and impossible Deity." Do I then reject God? Am I an atheist? Far from it. Indeed, my God is the same God as that of St. Francis de Sales. One day he was asked, "Who is God?" "He is a spirit infinitely

superior to every intelligence, who is everywhere without being perceived anywhere, as the soul is within the body without being seen, and in telling you this," he added in a grave and deeply concerned tone, "*I do not pretend to tell you who God is, but rather to make you understand I am not able to tell.*" I believe in a something and a somebody in an unknowable beyond. My constant, earnest prayer is, "Let there be Light!" Why I believe, I don't know; I simply believe. Then you have faith, someone may say. Yes, I have a certain kind of faith, but not the kind described by a little child, and the kind Rome supplies, namely, "Faith is that quality which enables us to believe what we know to be untrue."

The only way I can explain how priests and ministers preach so dogmatically anything and almost everything, is that they simply assume or imagine certain groundwork as God's spoken word. After that all is easy. As someone has put it, the rest is settled, "Go forth believing without questioning; *act as though it were so and it is so.* This is faith pure and simple."

I am quite prepared for the accustomed accusation that my renunciation of the priesthood will arouse, the same accusation that has always been made against others, "The source of all this unbelief is, of course, in the proud mind and sensual heart of man." I admit I am proud and sensual, but that does not prove the Roman Catholic Church is justified in holding me in immoral and dishonest bondage, by refusing me the right to resign honorably from the priesthood, nor does it prove the truth or justice of other defective teachings and discipline of the Church.

I recall the story told of a poor woman who was summoned to the deathbed of her husband. He realized his end was approaching and began to enumerate to his wife the state of his financial affairs. Every time he mentioned the name of one of his debtors, the weeping wife would wring her hands and moan, "Sensible to the last," but when he named a creditor, she would shriek, "O my, how he raves!" While I professed Roman Catholicism I was, in the minds of the faithful,

"Sensible to the last," but now I may expect the piercing cry, "O my, how he raves!"

I do not pretend to be able to offer an infallible substitute for my religion. I do not maintain that anybody else should be swayed by the reasons that have uprooted my boyhood's faith. I duly appreciate all the Church's priests have done to make me happy at Sunday School, at College and in the Seminary. I am not unmindful that the Church aided me to a highly honorable position in the United States Navy. I cannot forget that many times, while a boy and a young man, the moral teachings about sin's wickedness and virtue's sweet rewards guided, sustained, consoled and encouraged me, giving me hopes which made life worth living, and alleviating that anguish of soul which often drives those, without faith in a God, to misery and degradation. To appear an ungrateful child now is the saddest and most bitter moment of my existence. Were I not "sustained by an unfaltering trust" that my first and supreme duty in life is to be honest, I would collapse.

My heart grows faint, and my woe is unutterable, as I pay the forfeit of my heart's true convictions. Henceforth, all is sacrificed. Never again shall I receive the smiles of innocent children, bowing sweetly and lovingly, and greeting me with a fond, "Good Morning, Father;" never again shall I stand at the bedside of sick, fervent old Irish women, to whom the priest is more than God Himself, and hear, after administering Extreme Unction, a heartfelt, faith-inspiring, "God bless you, Father;" never again can I go with the olden welcome to my home, my relatives and my friends. Everybody and everything, made dear and sacred by blood and the ties of youth's warm friendships, must be lost forever. Yes, there is a Hell, and the Church has made it, on earth, for the priest who dares leave her. She may well wear an ironic smile, for She knows the pain inflicted by her grief-bearing "Pereat."

Would that my kith and kin, all deeply beloved, might have been spared the sorrows of my past sins and of this renunciation, so heart-rending to a Catholic family.

I am happy in having courage. It is man's duty to face every hardship and fortune of life, and to do so honestly. I shall face my troubles, my debts and the dark future, and I shall conquer, bearing in mind two texts of Scripture, worthy of any creed, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," and "A thief is better than a man that is always lying; but both of them shall inherit destruction."

Scarcely a sign of regret for sins committed can be found in this brief autobiography; it is because, "Alas! I have not words to tell my grief." Indeed, "Great sorrows cannot speak."

I fear there are still traces in me of the rank superstition which pervaded my life up to five years ago. Besides, the emotions and sympathies of my Irish heart have urged me to put forth all I could for that religion which is at least honestly, if not wisely, professed by thousands of the Celtic race. Nevertheless, whatever praise or admiration I have expressed for the Church must not be interpreted in favor of that organization as a useful social body. On the contrary, I con-

sider the Roman Catholic Church to be a most pernicious institution which promotes only hatred, inequality and dishonesty among men.

My renunciation of the Roman Catholic faith is none the less positive, emphatic and permanent because I return thanks to those priests who did for me, during many years, what they undoubtedly believed was for my welfare, but what in reality was suited only to work ruination. Those good men who have proved themselves virtuous priests are such in spite of and not because of the career they are following. In fact, they would be far more helpful members of society if their organization were blotted out of existence.

My regard for the Confessional is not based upon its being divine. Its usefulness appeals to me because it is a means of enjoying and profiting by the sacred confidence of one man in a fellow-man. Its true base is the integrity of human nature, which guards honestly what one heart reveals to another, when in quest of advice, encouragement and consolation. In saying the Confessional would be the most likely feature to

draw me back to Roman Catholicism, I do not infer, or in any wise imply, that this one thing can ever possibly hypnotize me and revive my childhood's belief.

No, it would be simply puerile for me to return to the Church of Rome, the great, tyrannical Trust, the religious oppressor, madly claiming to have a monopoly of the whole Kingdom of Heaven, and to be the sole, legitimate distributor of earthly happiness.

Would that I might send forth the story of my struggles, backed by the unblemished character I enjoyed during the first twenty-seven years of my life! Since I cannot, the wisdom of Bishop Spalding must be borne in mind by the reader, "It is ignorance or prejudice to make a man's conduct an argument against the worth of his writings" and "If thy one object is truth what matter whether thou find it with thy friends or thy foes. If thou hearest it from the lips of a convict, it is sacred as though it had been spoken by the holiest of men."

*"The saddest truth is better than the
merriest lie."*—"Means and Ends of
Education."—BISHOP SPALDING.

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